

LANDS

Lands managed by BLM acreages are identified (on BLM recreation maps) as public lands (PL), land utilization (LU) lands, other and subsurface. Public lands have always been under Federal management. Land utilization lands were in private ownership at one time but were purchased through the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act of 1937. This act allowed farm families to sell their homesteads at their option, and start again during this financial crisis. Lands classified as "other" have been withdrawn from multiple use management for possible use as power sites, stock driveways, etc. Subsurface acres are those where the Federal Government reserved the mineral rights.

The following is a breakdown by county of PL, LU, "other" and subsurface acres in the resource area. The surface figures were obtained from Form 1165-4, "Public Lands Under Exclusive Jurisdiction of the BLM, fiscal year 1981" at the BLM Montana State Office. The subsurface figures are from the files at the Billings Resource Area Office.

Acreages of the Billings Resource Area:

Carbon County

PL—204,565
LU—None
Other—2,583
Subsurface—326,881.67

Golden Valley County

PL—8,195
LU—None
Other—80
Subsurface—43,780.83

Wheatland County

PL—2,195
LU—None
Other—None
Subsurface—22,340.68

Musselshell County

PL—15,186
LU—89,500
Other—None
Subsurface—253,030.37

Yellowstone County

PL—15,180
LU—70,693
Other—None
Subsurface—126,093.41

Big Horn County

Subsurface—501.08

Stillwater County

PL—4,049
LU—None
Other—1,641
Subsurface—58,474.52

Sweet Grass County

PL—15,773
LU—None
Other—793
Subsurface—74,982

Total:

PL and LU—425,336 acres
Other—5,097
Subsurface—906,084.56

With the exception of the Pryor Mountain area and the Bridger, Warren, Belfry Triangle Area, public land tracts in this resource area are scattered and isolated (see Map 1—Map Pocket). There have been previous attempts to consolidate or dispose of these tracts in Golden Valley and Wheatland Counties.

Land Tenure Adjustment

An inventory of the 36,156 acre Land Tenure Adjustment area placed these public lands in three categories. The Land Tenure Adjustment area is located along the Yellowstone and Stillwater Rivers and an area north of Billings (see Map 1—Map Packet). After applying the disposal and retention criteria (see Appendix 1.3), and following public input, the tracts were placed in the following categories: 7,459 acres available for disposal; 26,314 acres for retention; and 2,382 acres for further study. Appendix 1.6 shows the legal descriptions of the tracts within this area.

Also following public input, the remainder of the resource area was zoned into either retention or disposal zones. Approximately 42,350 acres of public land are located in disposal zones, while 364,350 acres remain in the retention zones. An additional 10,150 acres of public land were identified as suitable for possible exchange to the U.S. Forest Service, and would therefore not leave public ownership.

The total acreage identified for possible disposal by sale, exchange, or other authorized means is approximately 49,809 acres.

Classifications

Portions of the Pryor Mountain area, including most of the PMWHR, have been classified for retention under the Classification and Multiple Use (C&MU) Act of 1964. These lands, approximately 28,586 acres, have been further segregated from appropriation under the agricultural land laws, from sales under Section 2455 of the Revised Statutes, and from operation of the general mining laws, but not from the mineral leasing laws.

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 repealed some of the agricultural land laws and Section 2455 of the Revised Statutes. The only agricultural land laws remaining are the Desert Land Entry and the Carey Act.

Washington Office directive dated June 18, 1981 (see Appendix 1.7 OAD No. 81-11), has instructed that all C&MU classifications be examined and if possible revoked by the end of fiscal year 1983. The C&MU classifications on the Billings Resource Area were reviewed and revoked in September 1983.

RECREATION

The major forms of recreation on public lands in the Billings Resource Area include hunting, fishing, river floating and off-road vehicle (ORV) use. General recreation uses include hiking, camping, picnicking, spelunking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and sledding.

Hunting is conducted primarily for deer, pronghorn antelope, upland birds and waterfowl. Due to the scattered landownership pattern, the number of hunter days spent on public land in the Billings Resource Area is not known, however, the interest and trend continues to increase.

Fishing is primarily stream fishing with a variety of species available. The use of BLM fishing waters cannot be quantified because of the limited ownership. However, 200 visits were recorded at Hamilton's Point, a fishing access area east of Roundup, from May 1 to October 1, 1981. It also appears spring use in 1982 was higher than in 1981.

Off-road vehicle use is generally well dispersed throughout the area. However, several areas require special ORV regulations in order to reduce conflicts with adjacent landowners and protect resource values.

The South Hills area is located 2 miles south of Billings, east of the Blue Creek Road, and consists of 1,200 acres of public lands adjacent to an expanding housing development. In order to reduce conflicts, the BLM informally closed a 70 acre portion of the area near the subdivision to ORV use in April 1982.

Off-road vehicle restrictions have been in effect in the Pryor Mountain and the Acton area to protect other resources. The BLM managed portion of the Pryor Mountains is located approximately 70 miles south of Billings and consists of 92,000 acres. In July 1979, 52,000 acres were designated as limited to specific roads and trails and 40,000 acres were designated open to ORV use. The Acton area is located 13 miles northwest of Billings and consists of 3,800 acres. Off-road vehicle use was designated as limited to specific roads and trails in July 1980.

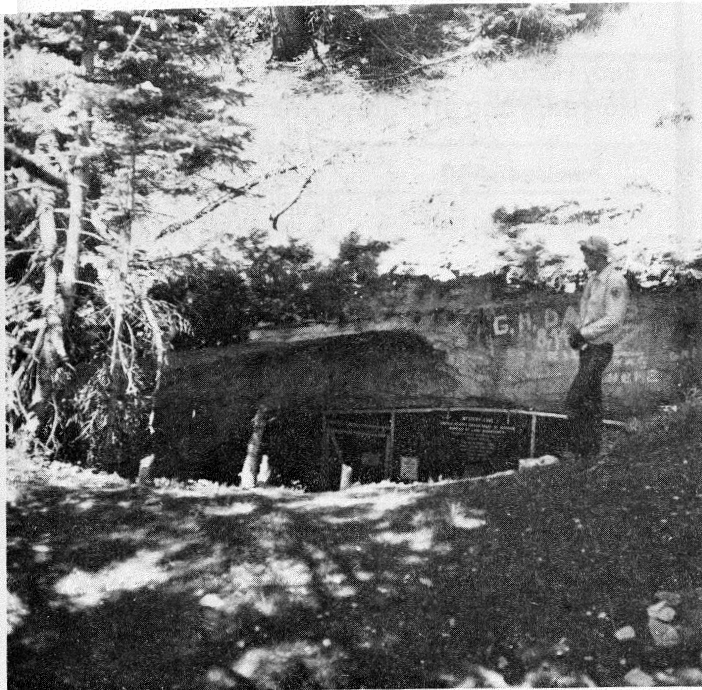
Other Primary Recreation Sites

Penn's Cabin, a popular site used for overnight stays in conjunction with recreational use, is 70 miles south of Billings on top of East Pryor Mountain. The cabin is open to the public year around.



Penn's Cabin

Mystery Cave is located 70 miles south of Billings in the Pryor Mountains. It's one of the more spectacular caverns on BLM lands in Montana. The BLM's cave management policies do not allow indiscriminate entrance into Mystery Cave without a BLM guide. It is therefore closed from November through May. Bureau of Land Management guided tours can be provided throughout the remainder of the year upon request. Because of the fragile nature of the cave, a large increase in use could not be sustained without creating resource damage.



Mystery Cave

The Billings Resource Area manages an environmental education site consisting of 77 acres, north of Shepherd, Montana. This Shepherd Ah-Nei area is used by Billings school children for field trips and outdoor educational experiences. Developments at the site include trails, signs, parking areas and comfort stations. Because of the increased cost of transportation, organized school use has decreased significantly in recent years.



Shepherd Ah-Nei Environmental Education Site

A potential environmental education site exists 13 miles northwest of Billings near the community of Acton. It is not currently being utilized for environmental education purposes.

Visual Resource Management

Visual resource management is also a function of the BLM's recreation management program. Visual resources are a consideration before developments or activities which might impair scenic qualities can occur. Visual resources are generally considered of high quality throughout the resource area. The glossary provides a definition of BLM visual resource classifications.

Approximately 200,000 acres of public land in the resource area were inventoried for the purpose of assigning visual resource management classes. This included all of Musselshell and a portion of Yellowstone County, northeast of Billings. Visual management classes assigned consisted of Class II (good—35% of area), Class III (medium—30% of area) and Class IV (poor—35% of area).

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Information about cultural resources in the Billings Resource Area has been collected from the Lewistown District Class I Inventory, office files, inventory reports, communication with local members of the Montana Archeological Society and clearance reports for range, oil and gas undertakings. Although the data is quite general and primarily concentrated within the Pryor Mountain area, it has provided some insight about the types, quality, number and distribution of cultural resources currently known in the Billings Resource Area.

There are 1,262 sites recorded on BLM, state, Crow Tribal and private lands within the resource area. These prehistoric and historic sites represent human occupation during the past 12,000 years. Prehistoric sites are of the following types: lithic scatters, hearths, tipi rings, conical pole and cribbed log structures, rockshelters, caves, rock art, vision quests, fortifications, cairns, rock alignments, medicine wheels, quarries, burials and bison kills. Historic sites are represented by the remains of homesteads, historic trails, trading posts, abandoned coal mines and debris from early oil and gas activities (see Table 3.11). Lithic scatters comprise the majority of prehistoric sites on BLM land within the resource area, and tipi ring sites, hearths and fire-cracked rock and rock art are the next most common sites.

The distribution of prehistoric sites in the resource area varies according to environmental zones and topographic features. The figures in Table 3.12 indicate the site distribution for each environmental zone as determined from cultural resource inventory reports and professional judgment. The sites in all environmental zones tend to be associated with topographic features such as stream terraces, canyon walls, ridges, cuestas and escarpments. The occurrence of water in streams, springs and small lakes is a significant factor in site distribution. Invariably, the most important sites (major habitation and subsistence types) tend to be situated where water, food, fuel and shelter could be found in the past.

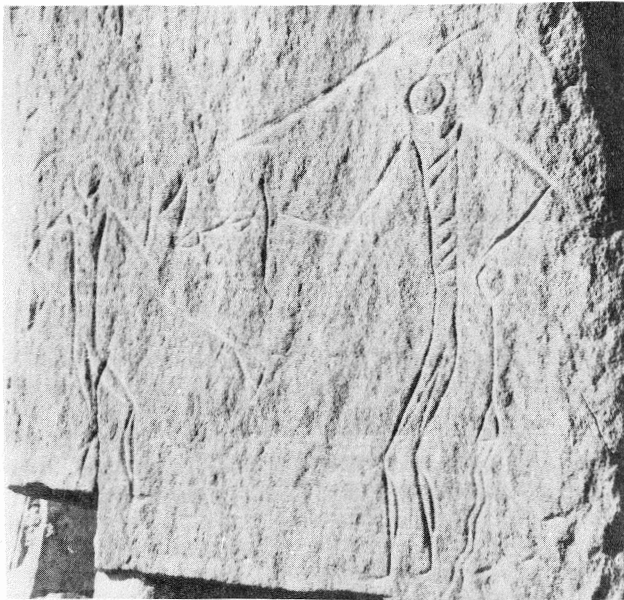
Homestead remnants are the most common historic site type in the resource area. An ongoing study of homesteading in Montana funded by the Montana State Historic Preservation Office will soon provide data concerning historic site evaluation and settlement patterns. Most homestead sites on BLM land occur on tracts of land utilization land that were acquired by the government during the Great Depression. Based on the assumption that approximately 160 acres of LU land should have a homestead remnant, it was estimated that approximately 1,000 homestead sites are located on the 161,834 LU acres in Musselshell, Yellowstone and Stillwater Counties in the resource area.

TABLE 3.11: CULTURAL RESOURCES AND CHRONOLOGY IN THE BILLINGS RESOURCE AREA

Cultural Period	Cultural Site Types on BLM Lands
Paleo-Indian (10,000-6000 BC)	lithic scatters caves rockshelters
Early and Middle Plains Archaic (6000-1000 BC)	lithic scatters caves rockshelters hearths
Late Plains Archaic (1000 BC-500 AD)	lithic scatters caves rockshelters hearths cairns bison kills rock alignments cribbed log structures tipi rings
Late Prehistoric (500-1800 AD)	lithic scatters caves rockshelters hearths cairns bison kills rock alignments rock art cribbed log structures tipi rings
Early Historic (1800-1880)	lithic scatters hearths cairns bison kills rock alignments rock art cribbed log structures tipi rings burials medicine wheel historic trails trading posts
Late Historic (1880-1930)	homesteads mining, oil and gas debris

Source: BLM, 1982

Presently there are three properties on BLM land in the resource area which are listed in the National Register of Historic Places: the Hoskins Basin Archeological District, the Demi-John Flat Archeological District and Petroglyph Canyon. The Bandit Site (48BH460), has been determined eligible for listing in the National Register, and many other sites not yet fully evaluated may be potentially eligible for a similar listing.



Indian Petroglyphs

TABLE 3.12: PREHISTORIC SITE DISTRIBUTION

Environmental Zones	Distribution
Musselshell Pine Breaks	2-3 sites per 640 acres
Forested Isolated Mountain Groups	.6-1.3 sites per 640 acres
Fort Union Pine Tablelands and Escarpments	2-3 sites per 640 acres
Yellowstone Valley	3-4 sites per 640 acres
Foothill Grasslands and Plains	1-2 sites per 640 acres
Beartooth Plateau and Volcanic Uplands	.5 sites per 640 acres
Clarks Fork and Drylands	2 sites per 640 acres
Pryor Mountains-Bighorn Canyon	.93 sites per 640 acres

Source: BLM, 1982